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The *Journal* is a benefit of membership of the Royal Society of Medicine and through it we aim to offer Fellows something stimulating or instructive or entertaining each month (preferably all three). It has also won a large readership outside the Society. As with medicine itself, the scope is almost limitless—from the clinical anecdote to the latest synthetic molecule, from health service politics to hermeneutics, from bronze age archaeology to art in hospitals. Our guiding principle is that good specialists read outside their specialty. Solemnity is not compulsory.

For scientific work we offer a brisk review process, and can publish high-priority papers 6–8 weeks after acceptance, correspondence and meeting reports in as little as 3; thus, we attract good papers by offering an efficient service to authors. Our prime responsibility, however, is to the readers. If you are thinking of submitting a paper, please bear in mind that our readers come from the world over, from many specialties and some from none. Whereas in a specialist journal you may be writing for colleagues with shared knowledge (and jargon), in the *JRSM* you seek to engage wider attention. Do not be too proud to explain complexities; say why your message is important; and be brief.

With these provisos, we welcome your contributions—whether original papers, reviews, opinion pieces, or whatever. If your article stems from a meeting of one of the Society's Sections or Forums, it should be submitted to Professor Tim David, Proceedings Editor, *JRSM*, Booth Hall Children's Hospital, Blackley, Manchester M9 7AA (Tel/Fax: +44(0)161 740 6239; E-mail: tjd@netcomuk.co.uk); on the title page please indicate when and where the meeting took place. All other items should be sent to Dr Robin Fox, Editor, *JRSM*, Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AE (Tel/Fax: +44(0)1892 853520; E-mail: RobinFox1@compuserve.com). The following paragraphs offer hints on preparing and submitting material to the *JRSM*. Both of us stand ready to help at every stage in the genesis of an article, from the gleam in the eye to the final proofs. Call us or write.

PRESENTATION AND SUBMISSION

Prepare your paper according to the 'Vancouver Style' (Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals. *N Engl J Med* 1997;336:309–15). We do not follow this exactly, but we will make the necessary adjustments. Take particular note of the passages on authorship, redundant publication, and ethics. Use generic names and SI units (with the usual exceptions such as blood pressure in mmHg and haemoglobin in g/dL). Send four copies of the text, double-spaced; we ask only two copies of glossy figures. Provide an e-mail address if you have one but please do not send full papers by e-mail.

The covering letter is important. To help the editors in their preliminary evaluation, please indicate why you think the paper suitable for the *JRSM*. We advise you to look at some recent issues, to see whether the subject has already been covered. If your paper should go on the fast track, let us know.

Be sure to supply the signatures of all authors, who should meet the criteria specified by the Vancouver Group (see above).

Declare any financial or other factors that might be perceived (by anyone) as a source of bias; funding should always be stated publicly, but conflicts of interest range from the serious to the trivial, and not all have to be aired in print—the editors will advise.

Another matter that may be debatable is redundant publication. If in doubt, give us the facts—about any overlap with other material in print or in press. You should also supply written permission to reproduce material from other publications and, where a patient might be identifiable, we need permission from that patient or his or her representatives.

Finally, indicate who is the corresponding author and where he or she can be contacted.

GUIDELINES ON LENGTH

If a paper is too long, too technical, or over-referenced but otherwise attractive, our response will be to negotiate rather than refuse. We refer you to the opening remarks

about readability and brevity. The *JRSM* is not the place for great lists of references (for a full paper, 40 should suffice). Here are some lengths not to exceed, unless there is good reason:

Issues of the day — 3 pages
Review articles — 4 pages
Original articles — 4 pages
Historical reviews — 4 pages
Personal papers — 2 pages
Case reports — 1.25 pages
(not more than 6 references)

Letters — 0.3 page

To clarify your ideas on the purpose of a case report, read J P Vandembroucke's 'Case reports in an evidence-based world'. *J R Soc Med* 1999; 92:159–63

One page of undiluted text is about 1000 words, and you must then allow for headings, figures, tables and references.

EDITORIAL RESPONSES

For articles, but not letters, we acknowledge receipt. The editors do a preliminary screen to eliminate submissions that are clearly unsuitable; and the remaining science-based articles, either original or review, are sent for peer review. Some material, naturally, is published without external review—commissioned editorials and book reviews, and letters (which, when accepted, usually go into the next issue).

PROOFS AND OFFPRINTS

For most contributions, proofs will be despatched to the corresponding author before publication. Occasionally, with letters, there may not be time. When an article is published, 25 offprints are supplied free of charge and are despatched approximately 3 weeks after publication. An order form for additional offprints will have been sent with the proofs.

The Royal Society of Medicine 1999/2000 Diary

Have you purchased your Royal Society of Medicine 1999/2000 diary yet? This new diary, which is of exceptional quality, is now available for purchase. Bound in calf skin with gilt page edges, this deluxe burgundy diary is available in week-to-view format. It contains much valuable information including useful addresses, forthcoming Society conferences, details of key personnel at the RSM and information about many of the services which the Society offers to its members.

The diary, which has the striking RSM Millennium logo on the front cover, runs from the end of September 1999 until the beginning of January 2001 and is now on sale from Domus Medica at the RSM.

You can obtain your copy of the 1999/2000 diary from Domus Medica on the 1st Floor at the RSM. You can also telephone Domus Medica on +44 (0)171 290 2960/1, complete this form and fax to +44 (0)171 290 2969 or send to Domus Medica, The Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AE, UK



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